

THE OBJECTIONABLE CORRELATIVE

amadeus, equus -- impressive plays about the irrational.
yet not irrational themselves.
to the contrary: logical, paraphraseable, fully
communicative.

hamlet, the turn of the screw, look back in anger,
travesties -- they leave us trying to iron out,
through versions and revisions,
that final intractable wrinkle.

poetry derives from childhood,
not from child psychologists.

NO RESTITUTION

yeats wrote, "there is some one myth for every man."

a man had such a myth,
explained it to a friend who did not understand,
and the friend stole it for a poem.

it didn't mean much to the friend,
a publication to add to a dossier.

but the man from whom the myth was taken
never got over it. there is an absence in his life.
he tries to avoid the friend now,
but it's hard, since they listened to each other
for so long, and still sympathize.

and the friend would probably give the myth back,
but he took a thing that could not be returned.

A TEACHER

another of my colleagues is dying of cancer.
i don't know him well -- we aren't even
in the same department, not even the
same building -- but i have been guided
by him nonetheless.

he's always been a first-rate teacher
and a first-rate scholar, and he's won
all the awards in the state

for that sort of thing.
but he somehow found the time to also
be a leader of the faculty and a defender
of the rights of underdogs off-campus
as well as on.

in the academic senate, i have always
glanced his way before raising my voice
yea or nay.

he looks fine, but in a year or two
he'll be dead.

i'm not a religious person. the only
immortality in which i firmly believe
is that we live on in those who have
learned from us. it's not a new
insight. it's the point, i suppose,
of to the lighthouse and of the whole
jewish religion.

i've learned from my colleague, many have,
and if anyone he stood up to
thinks that he or she will have
an easier time of it from now on,

may they think twice.

HE WAS ALSO MODEST, INTELLIGENT, GENEROUS AND,
WORST OF ALL, LIKEABLE

i picked up my mail at school today
for the first time since the winter holidays began
and it was a good day:

2 poems in one little magazine;
2 poems in another;
a couple of poems accepted by a third place;
and a review published in an academic journal.

i don't have many days like that.

the only problem is
i was in the same graduate school
at the same time as the novelist, brian garfield,
best known perhaps for death wish and hopscotch,
and on one not particularly noteworthy saturday
he had six books accepted for publication.
he already, at twenty-four,
had twenty-four volumes in print.